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SUBJECT: IRAQ RECONCILIATION CONFERENCE POSTPONED

REF: AMMAN 2495

Classified By: Ambassador David Hale for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (U) The GOJ announced April 21 the postponement of the conference of Iraqi religious and tribal leaders that was to have taken place in Amman on April 22 under the patronage of King Abdullah and the Al Al-Bayt Foundation (reftel). The GOJ statement emphasized the fact that Iraqi President Talabani had requested the postponement. The GOJ has not named a new date for the conference.

¶2. (U) A number of Iraqi notables had already arrived in Amman by the time the GOJ announced the postponement. Local media provided prominent coverage to King Abdullah,s meetings with several of these, including Hareth Dari of the Muslim Clerics' Commission, former premier Iyad Allawi, Chief Sunni Mufti Rafe Rifaie, Basra MP Kheirallah Basri, Fakhri Qaisi of the Salafist Commission, and Karim Khan Khalifa of the Baradof tribe. Also in Amman for the aborted Iraq conference was Egypt,s Mufti of the Republic, Ali Gomaa.

¶3. (C) The postponement of the Iraq reconciliation conference followed post,s engagement with the senior levels of the GOJ, in order to avoid complicating negotiations in Baghdad over a new Iraqi government. The postponement has disappointed some in the palace, including the chief architect of the conference, Prince Ghazi bin Muhammad, King Abdullah,s cousin and advisor on religious affairs. Before the cancellation, the GOJ had aimed considerable domestic publicity at the conference as evidence of the King,s leadership in the Arab and Muslim worlds. We expect the GOJ to try to reconvene the conference after a new Iraqi government is in place.

¶4. (U) A different conference, also organized by Prince Ghazi, opened in Amman April 24. The second annual &International Conference of Moderate Islamic Political Parties featured a number of Muslim figures from Iraq, Lebanon, Sudan, and other countries. In opening speeches, several speakers, notably Sheikh al Kubaysi of Iraq and Omar Bashir of Sudan, commented specifically about sectarian strife in Iraq, and called for Islamic unity.

HALE